



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

DC Child Care Subsidy Program

Waitlist Policy

The DC Child Care Subsidy Program helps DC families pay for the cost of child care. The program supports families with low and moderate incomes or other special circumstances that create a need for assistance to access high-quality education and care in the District. The program is funded by DC government local funds, as well as federal government funds from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The program is administered by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) with support from the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) and Level II child care providers.

Pursuant to 5-A DCMR § 201.2 (OSSE) has instituted a waitlist for the DC Child Care Subsidy Program effective May 12, 2026. This change is necessary to enable OSSE to prevent further increases in program costs above budgeted amounts, ensure the program's continued operation, and remain responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. This document details the waitlist policy for the DC Child Care Subsidy Program. Families currently receiving child care subsidies will continue to receive subsidies as long as they remain eligible and complete the eligibility redetermination process.

Waitlist

OSSE will establish and maintain a waitlist for the DC Child Care Subsidy Program effective May 12, 2026. Families applying for child care subsidies after May 12 while the policy is in effect will be subject to the waitlist.

New applicant families will be assigned to a waitlist priority group if they submit a complete application and are determined eligible for the program. Families will be notified of their waitlist priority group assignment. Within each priority group, families will be placed on the waitlist in the order in which their eligibility was determined.

Priority for Service

The waitlist uses six priority groups for subsidized child care services based on eligibility classifications listed in the [DC Child Care Subsidy Program Policy Manual](#).

Waitlist priority groups can be open, or closed, and some priority groups may be allowed to enroll without a waitlist. Based on available funding and current enrollment, OSSE will determine whether new enrollment is open to any priority groups, and will notify providers and families on the waitlist of the priority groups, if any, for which enrollment is open.

PRIORITY 1

- 2.4.2.1 Children under protective services
- 2.4.2.4 Children experiencing homelessness

PRIORITY 2

- 2.4.2.2 Children with disabilities
- 2.4.2.7 Children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start or Quality Improvement Network (QIN)

PRIORITY 3

- 2.4.2.3 Children of adults with disabilities
- 2.4.2.5 Children of teen parents
- 2.4.2.6 Children of elder caregivers
- 2.4.2.8 Children in families experiencing domestic/family violence
- 2.4.2.9 Children with a parent(s) or guardian(s) participating in addiction recovery programs

PRIORITY 4

- 2.4.1.1 Working parent(s) or guardian(s) with income below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL)
- 2.4.1.2 Parent(s) or guardian(s) in job training or education programs
- 2.4.1.3 Parent(s) or guardian(s) engaged in job search
- 2.4.1.4 TANF recipient or TANF payee
- 2.4.1.5 Participant in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

PRIORITY 5

- 2.4.1.1 Working parent(s) or guardian(s) with income at or above 150 percent of FPL and below 250 percent of FPL

PRIORITY 6

- 2.4.1.1 Working parent(s) or guardian(s) with income at or above 250 percent of FPL and below 300 percent of FPL

Application Process and Eligibility Determination for Families

Application Process

Families may apply for the DC Child Care Subsidy Program [online](#) or in-person at a Level II provider or a Department of Human Services (DHS) [service center](#).

Eligibility Determination and Redetermination

The [DC Child Care Subsidy Policy Manual](#) contains the program eligibility requirements (Section 2) and eligibility determination (Section 3).

For families currently enrolled prior to the waitlist policy going into effect, Level II providers may continue to conduct eligibility redeterminations for those children in the program.

After the waitlist policy is in effect, Level II providers may only determine program eligibility for applicants with written approval from OSSE. To receive written approval, Level II providers must complete a mandatory OSSE training. **Until a Level II provider completes training and receives written approval from OSSE, it will be unable to conduct new eligibility determinations.**

Applicants found eligible under a priority group for which enrollment is currently open (as described above) will be notified of their approved application and an Admission Form will be sent to the family and selected child care provider under existing procedures.

Applicants found eligible under a priority group for which enrollment is currently not open (as described above) will be notified of their approved application and their placement on the waitlist.

Applicants that do not satisfy all eligibility requirements, fail to provide all required documentation or provide information that is found to be false will receive a notice of denial.

Waitlist and Notification Procedures

Families will be assigned to the waitlist based on their priority group and the date of their eligibility determination. Families within the same priority group will be notified in chronological order based on the date of their eligibility determination.

As program funding allows, families will be notified by their eligibility worker of the opportunity to receive subsidized child care. Once notified, families will receive at least one follow-up notification and have **15 business days to confirm** eligibility and accept the subsidy. Families will be asked to confirm that they have not had any change in residence or income that would make them ineligible. Eligibility workers will assist families with selecting a child care provider, if needed, and send the Admission Form to the family and selected child care provider under standard procedures. If necessary, families may update their service needs from their initial application. The child's redetermination date shall be set no sooner than 12 months from the date the Admission Form is issued.

If a family does not accept the subsidy or does not respond to the notice within 15 business days, the next family on the waitlist will be contacted.

Families that decline a subsidy or fail to respond to the notice of subsidy availability and had their initial eligibility determination less than 12 months prior will be moved to the end of the waitlist.

Families that decline a subsidy or fail to respond to the notice of subsidy availability and had their initial eligibility determination at least 12 months prior will be terminated from the waitlist. An applicant may reapply for a subsidy and will be added to the waitlist, if applicable, based on the new eligibility determination date.

Reporting Changes

Waitlisted families are required to report to their eligibility worker the following changes within 10 calendar days of the change:

- A change in telephone number, email address or mailing address, including a change in residency outside of DC;
- A change in guardianship of the child(ren);
- An increase in income such that the family's income exceeds 85 percent of the state median income (SMI) for a family of the same size for more than 90 calendar days; and
- Termination of a parent or guardian's participation in work, training or education that exceeds 90 calendar days and is not included in the definition of "temporary change" found at 6.3.1 of the [DC Child Care Subsidy Program Policy Manual](#).

Waitlisted families are permitted to report changes in circumstances that may qualify them for eligibility under a higher priority group identified above. Waitlist notification to families will have information on how to report and contact their eligibility worker.

Communicating with Waitlisted Families

Eligibility workers may contact families to confirm contact information and interest in remaining on the waitlist and self-attestation of District residency and family income under 85 percent of SMI.

Additional Policies for Families and Providers Currently Participating in the DC Child Care Subsidy Program

While the waitlist is in place, the following policies for families already enrolled in the program shall be in effect:

- Current families must complete the eligibility redetermination process under standard procedures regardless of waitlist prioritization.
- Current families receiving child care subsidies may receive subsidized care for additional children by providing proof of the relationship (i.e., birth or adoption of a new child) under standard procedures.

- Families that fail to complete a timely redetermination will be terminated from the program. If they reapply to the DC Child Care Subsidy Program, they may be placed on the waitlist, subject to their priority group.
- Level II providers will conduct redeterminations for currently enrolled families and may add siblings of currently enrolled families to their family unit. Only approved Level II providers that choose to opt-in may continue to conduct eligibility determinations for any new applicants.
- OSSE will not issue new DC Child Care Subsidy provider agreements or Level II provider addendums while the waitlist is in effect or until further notice is provided by OSSE. Level I providers interested in becoming a Level II provider may join the provider waitlist by notifying their Education Services Monitor. Licensed child care providers interested in participating in the DC Child Care Subsidy Program should contact OSSE.Subsidy@dc.gov to be added to the provider waitlist.